

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, on both the House Floor and with fellow members of the New England Congressional Delegation, Congressman John Olver urged Congress to triple LIHEAP funds.

Congressman Olver made the following statement on the House Floor: “To significantly lower gas prices at the pump, Congress must end rampant speculation in crude oil futures, yet our Republican colleagues in both branches have consistently opposed such legislation.

Meanwhile a whole new crisis looms as families face a price approaching five dollars per gallon for heating oil for their homes – that is twice last winter’s price.

Last winter, in Massachusetts and New England alone, 350 thousand low-income families used the LIHEAP program to get by, yet only one in four of the families eligible by income used the program.

Many of those already eligible families will be in desperate need of help this winter and many more middle class families’ budgets will be severely stressed by the doubled price of home heating oil.

Heat for a home or apartment is not optional for any family and Congress must act on an historic investment in LIHEAP before we finish our session.”

Congressman Olver made the following statement at a New England Delegation LIHEAP press conference:

“This summer, Americans are focused on high gas prices. But in New England, a whole new crisis looms as families are faced with steeply rising costs to heat their homes this coming winter.

Last year, families paid on average \$2.50 for a gallon of home heating oil. Prices for this winter will average \$5 per gallon or more.

Traditionally, some 130,000 Massachusetts low income families and 350,000 New England low income families, have been able to supplement their heating costs with LIHEAP benefits.

Last winter, families received an average of \$750 towards their heating costs. Just about enough to cover 1 of the 3 tanks of oil required to heat a home for the winter.

But with oil prices nearly doubling, a families buying power will be cut in half, and many more families will be in need.

As a unified delegation we are proposing a \$10 Billion national investment - \$9 Billion in direct home heating assistance through LIHEAP and \$1 Billion in expansion of the Home Weatherization Program - which has added values because dollars saved by weatherization are saved every subsequent year and many jobs are created while weatherizing homes.

But LIHEAP will be further strained as more families are forced to seek help from the program. Across New England, only 1 in 4 eligible families actually utilized LIHEAP during this past winter.

In addition there will be many middle income families, not currently eligible for LIHEAP, who will be severely impacted by this winter's high prices.

An historic investment in LIHEAP is necessary to avert this crisis.

Heating a home is not an option for families and we believe Congress must act before we end our session."

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